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[54] EDUCATIONAL AID AND METHOD FOR USING SAME

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[73] Assignee: Peter Phillips Associates, Inc., Mount Vernon, N.Y.

[*] Notice: This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

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Related U.S. Application Data

[63] Continuation-in-part of application No. 08/783,867, Jan. 16, 1997, which is a continuation of application No. 08/172,884, Dec. 23, 1993, Pat. No. 5,651,678.

[51] Int. Cl.⁷ G09B 17/00; G09B 1/00

[52] U.S. Cl. 434/170; 434/176; 434/178

[58] Field of Search 434/167, 170, 434/172, 176, 178, 179, 184

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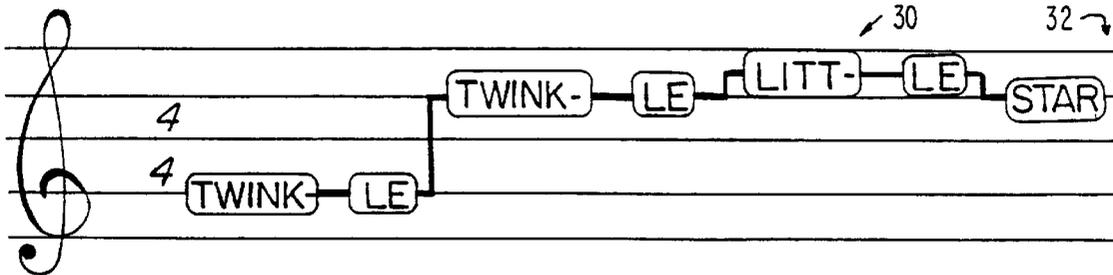
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Primary Examiner—Robert A. Hafer
Assistant Examiner—Kurt Fernstrom
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Frommer Lawrence & Haug LLP

[57] ABSTRACT

An educational aid and a method for using it to teach students to read by facilitating the rapid development of extensive sight-word vocabularies in an interesting and challenging manner through the utilization of a student's natural ability to learn and memorize a text. The educational aid includes a notation system for a readable format text, reinforcement aids for the key words of the text, and a system for teaching phonetic structure and pronunciation. The method for using the educational aid accomplishes the rapid development of sight-word vocabularies and phonetic understanding while requiring only a minimum of instruction and supervision from an educator.

33 Claims, 17 Drawing Sheets



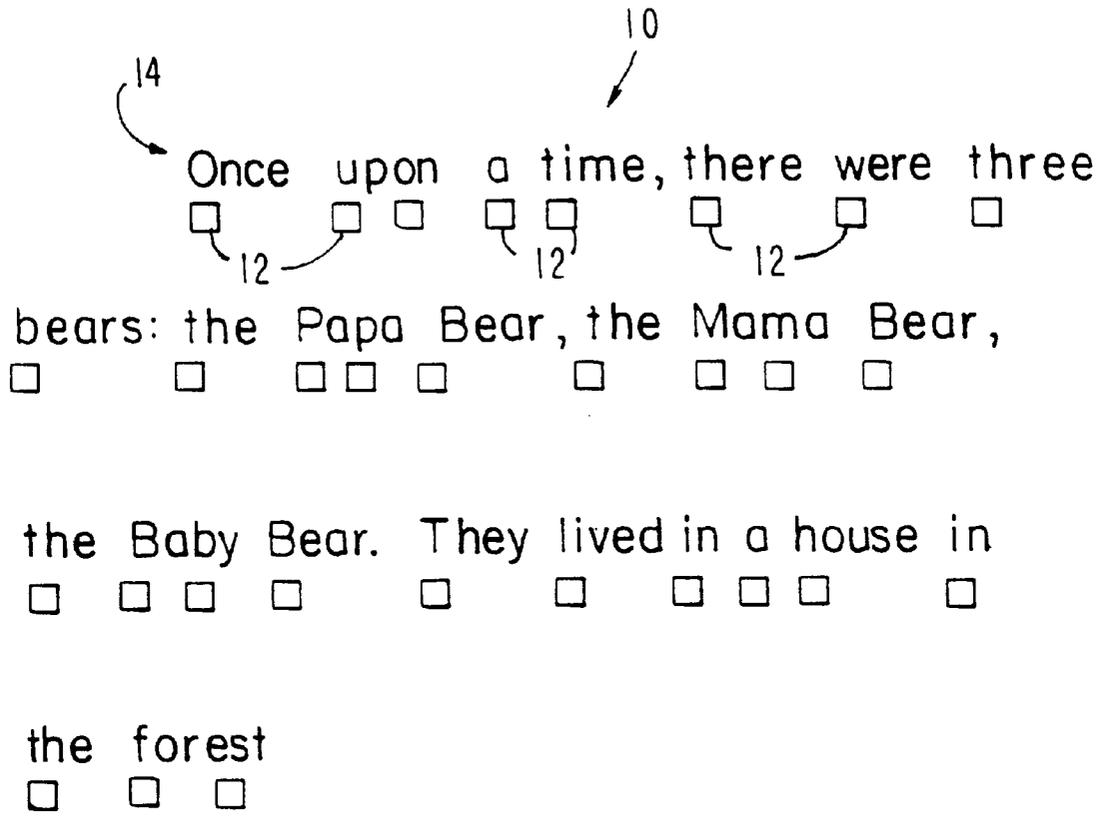


FIG. 1

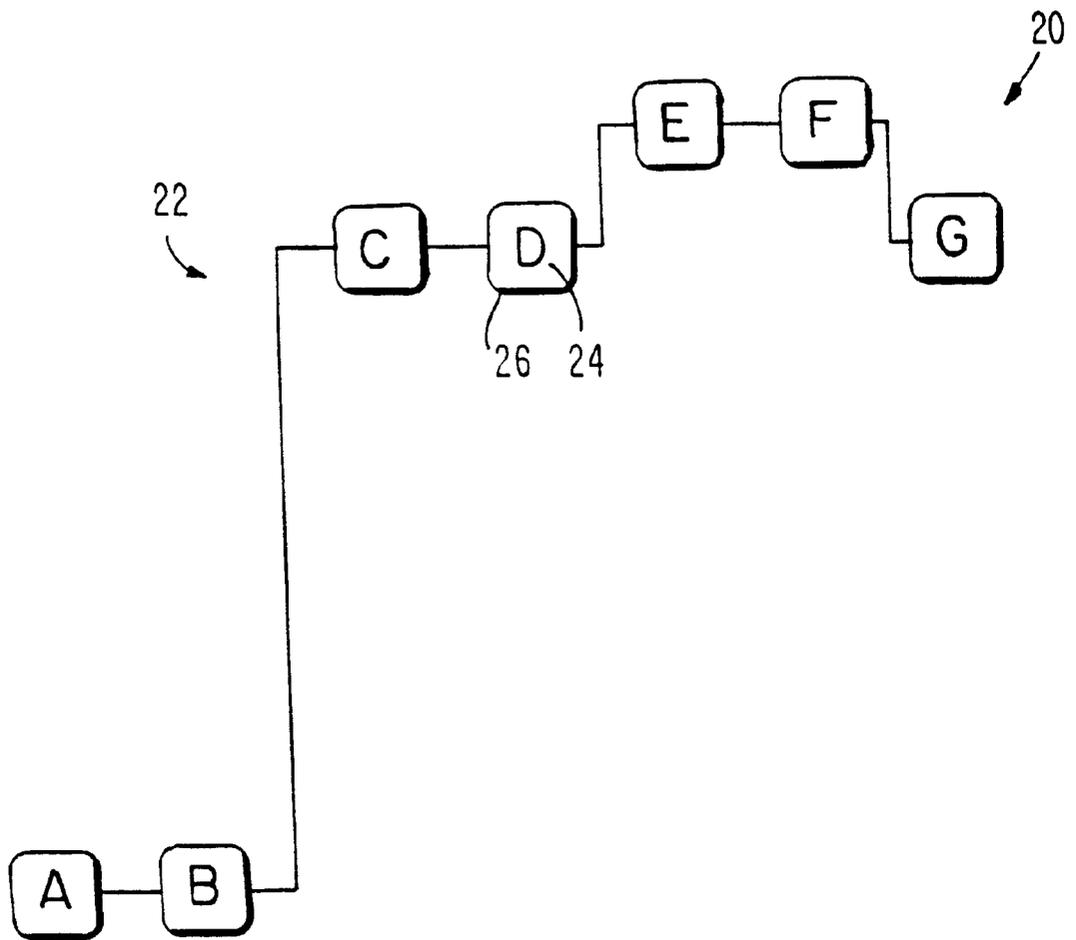
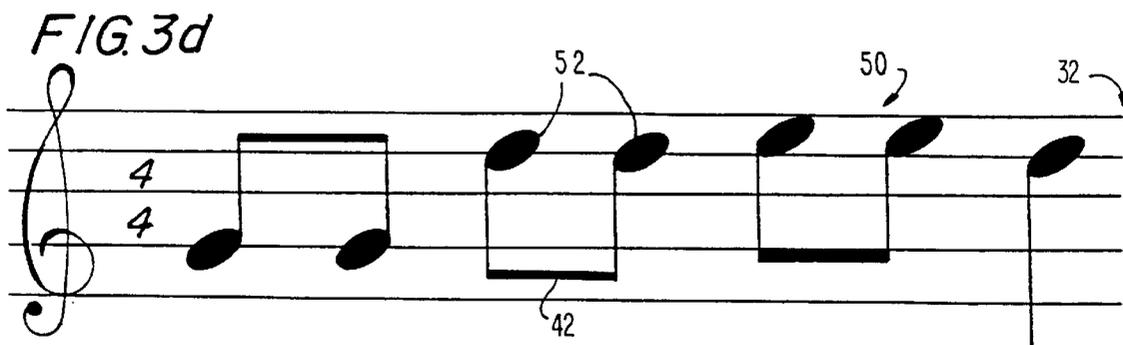
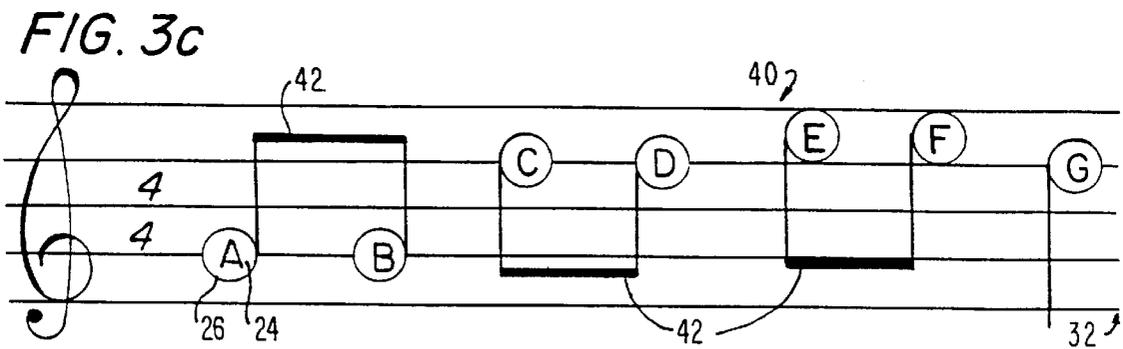
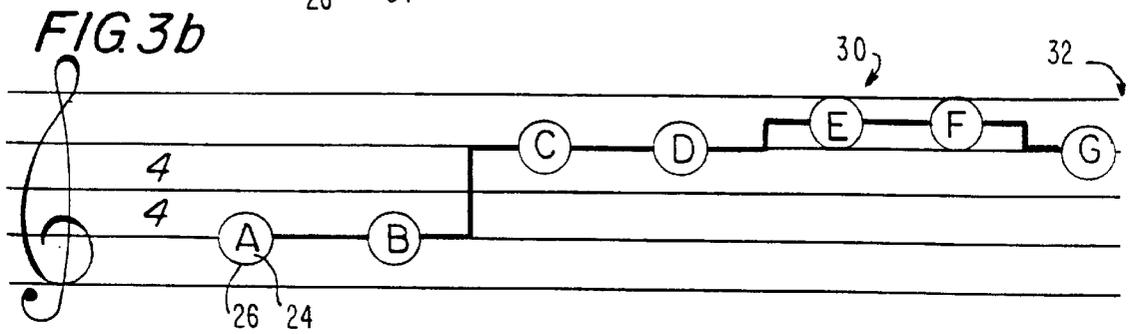
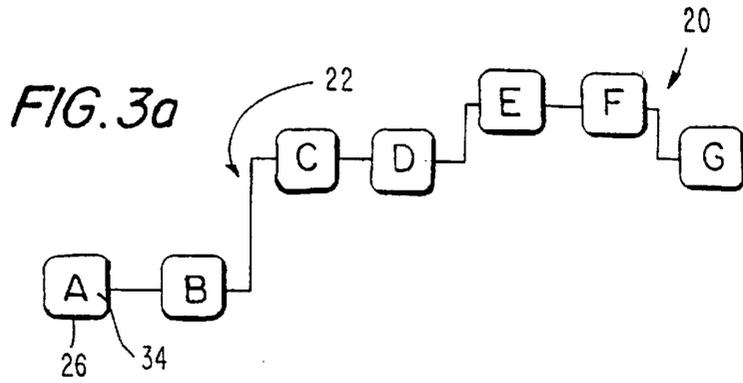


FIG. 2



60 ↘

Find Words		
they	were	mama
the	in	time
bears	and	were
three	the	bear
in	three	there

FIG. 4

70 ↘

Name and Write Words	
72 ↘ and _ _ _ _ bear _ _ _ _	in 74 ↘ mama _ _ _ _
bears _ _ _ _ _	papa _ _ _ _
baby _ _ _ _	the _ _ _
house _ _ _ _ _	three _ _ _ _ _

FIG. 5

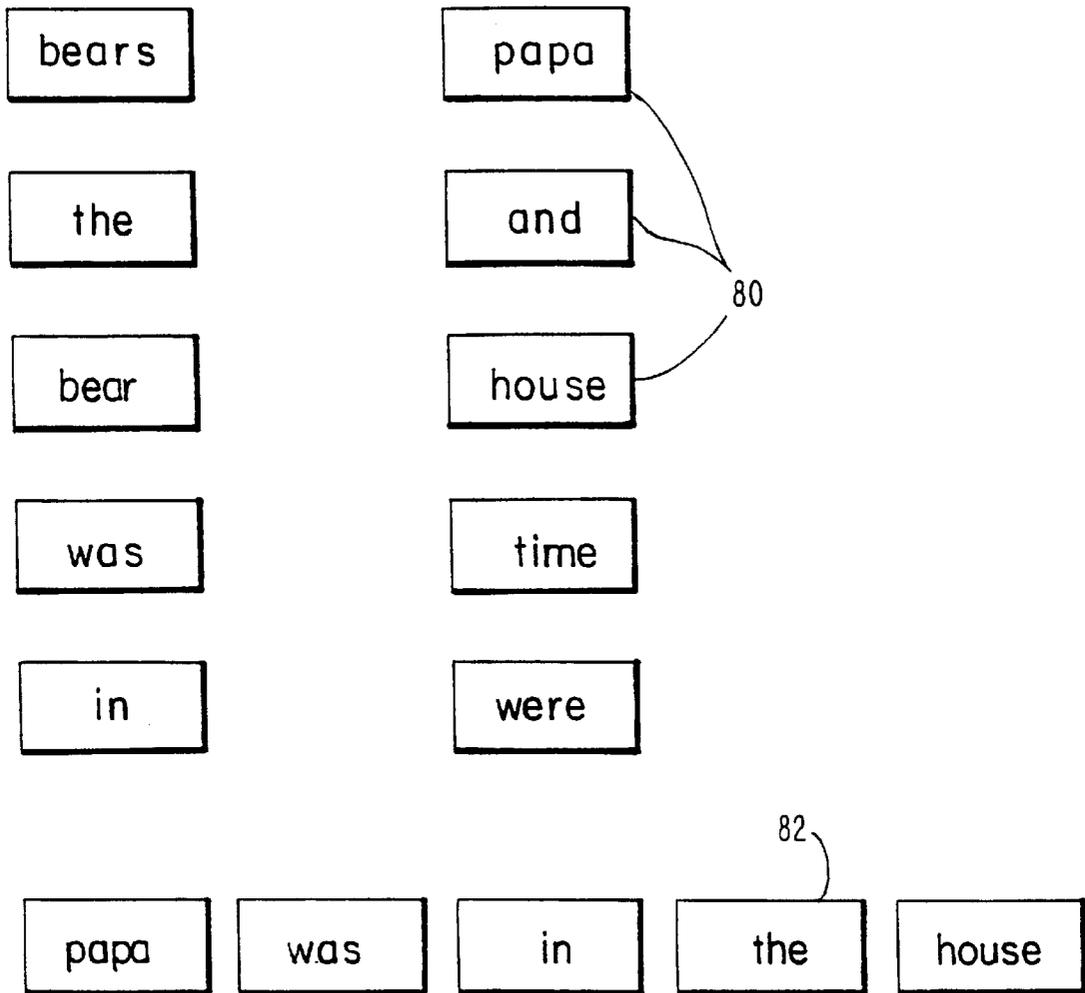


FIG. 6

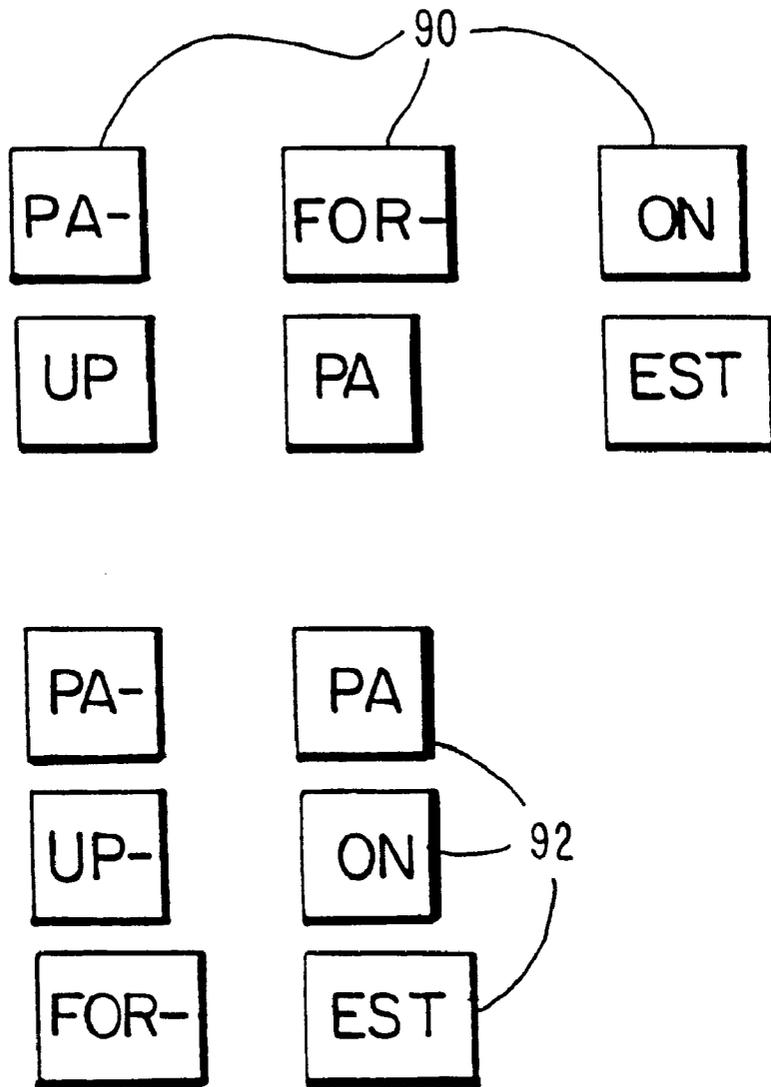
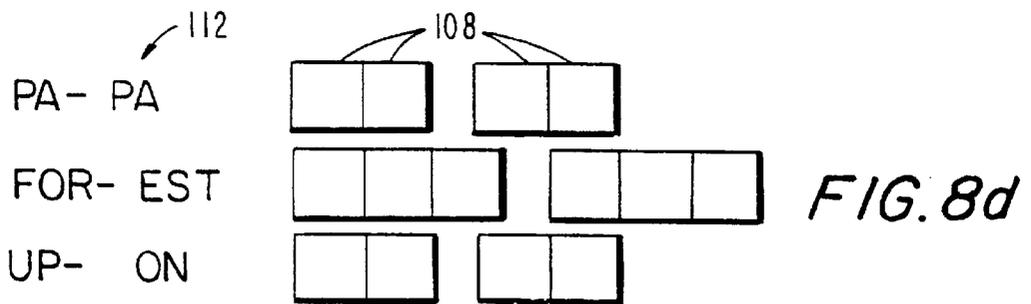
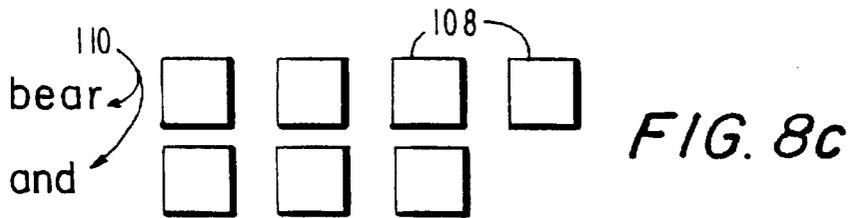
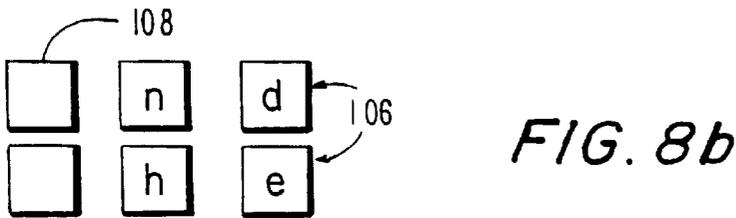
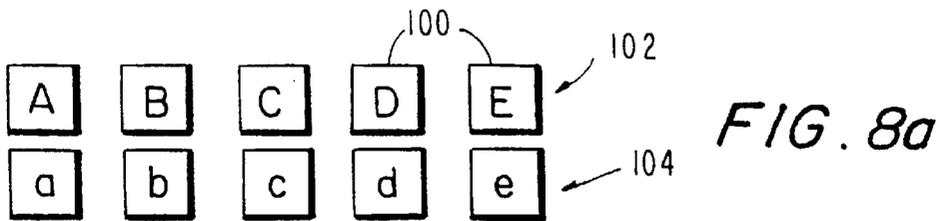
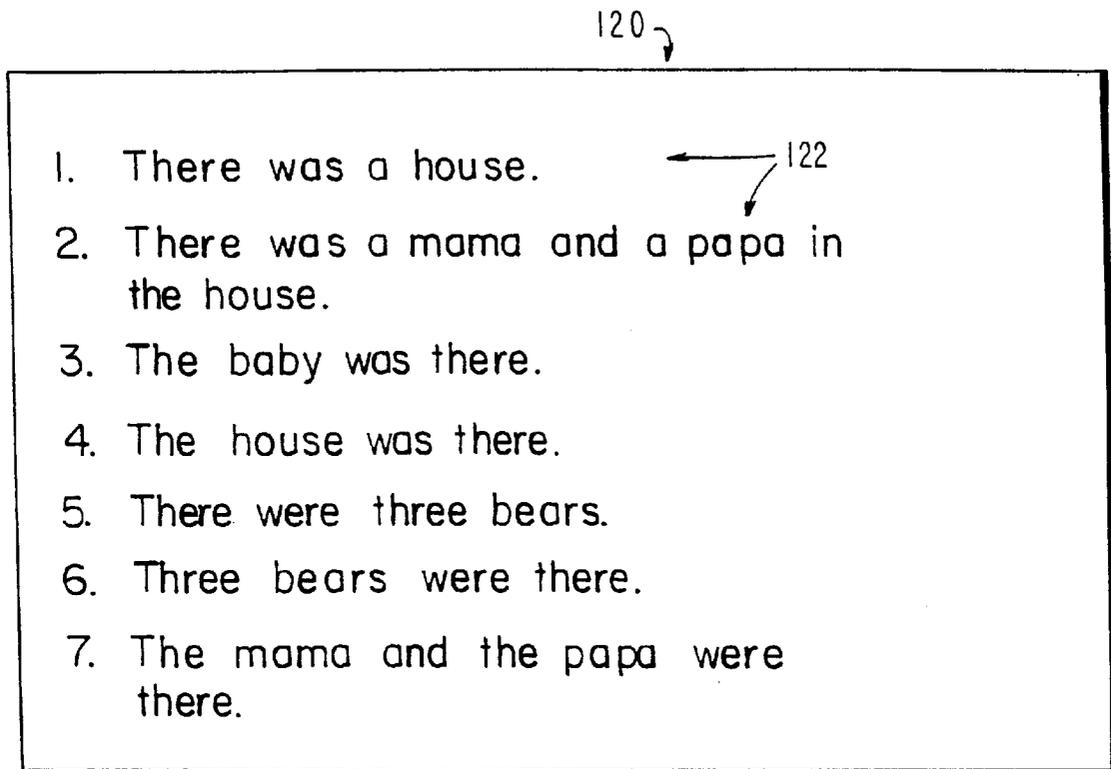


FIG. 7



*FIG. 9*

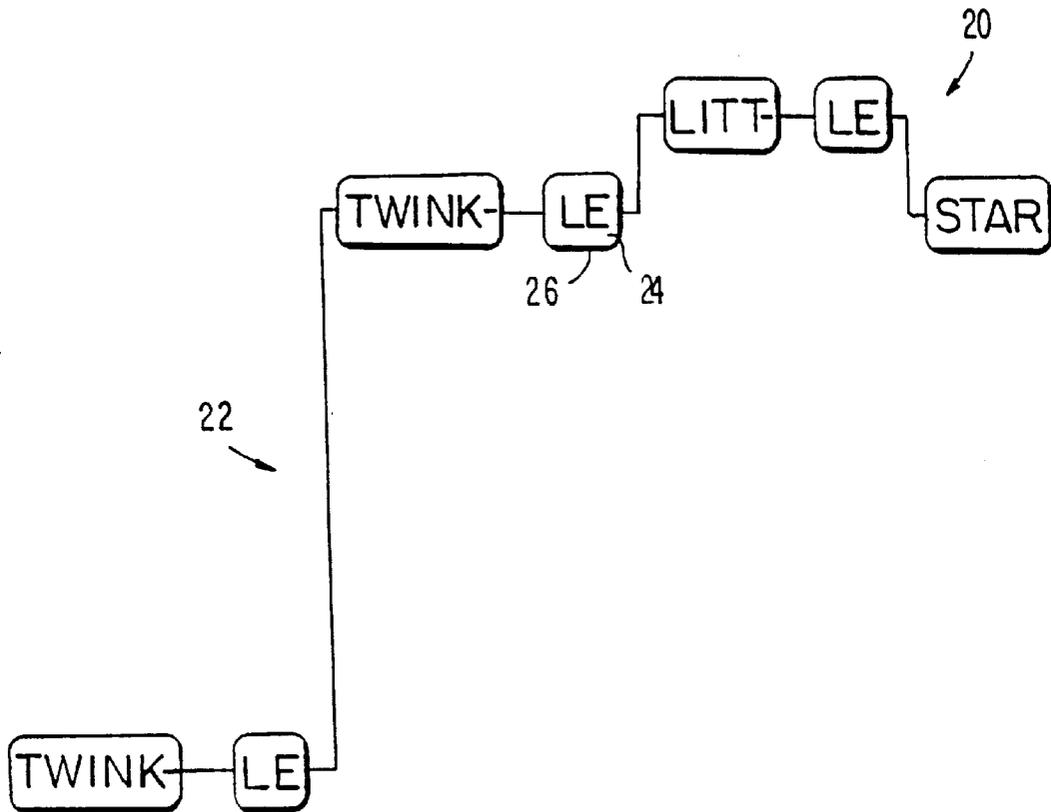


FIG. 10

FIG. 11a

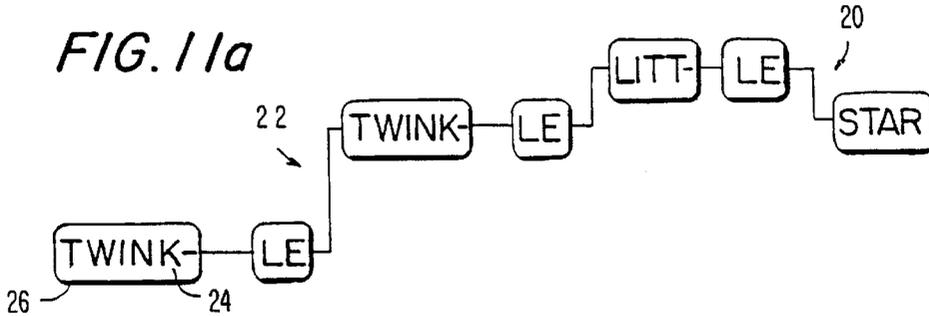


FIG. 11b

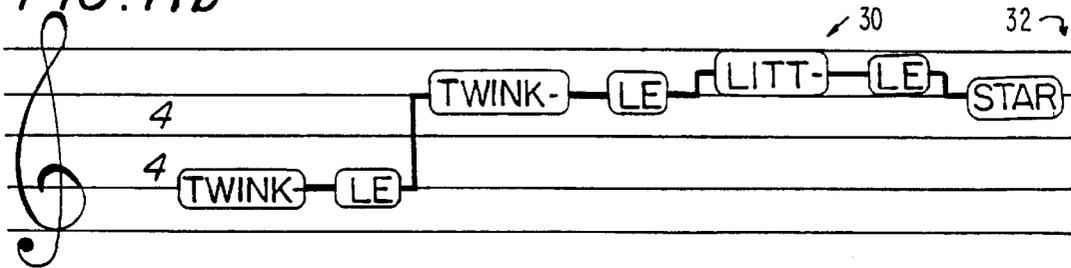


FIG. 11c

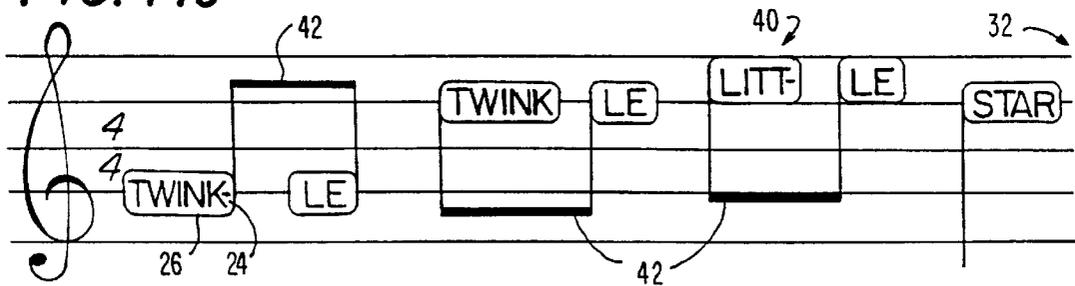
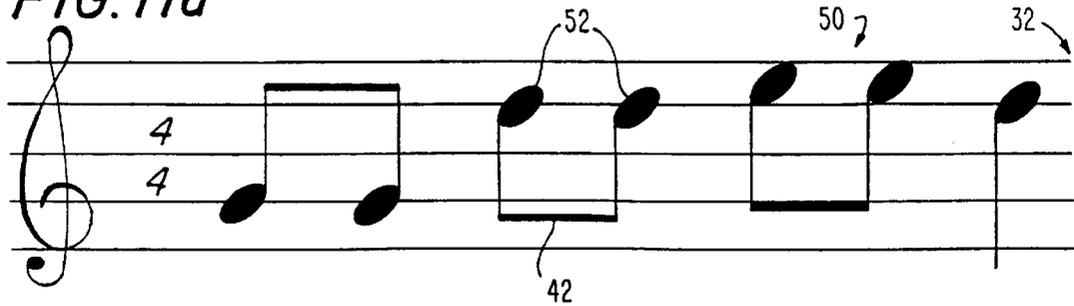


FIG. 11d



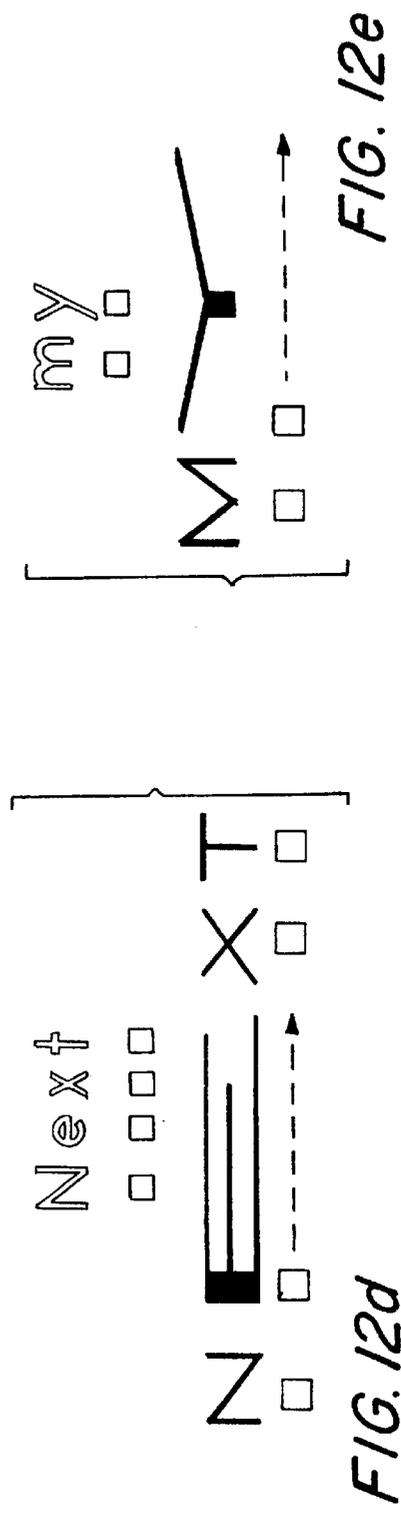
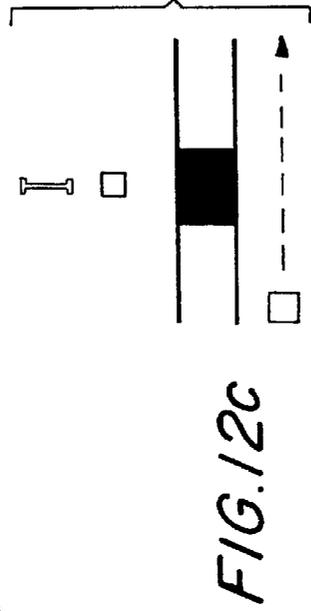
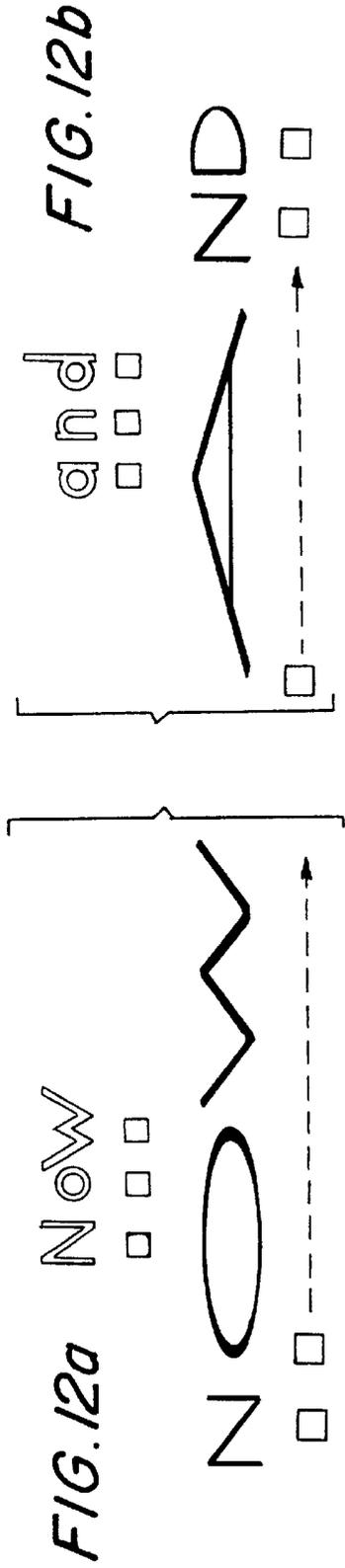


FIG. 13

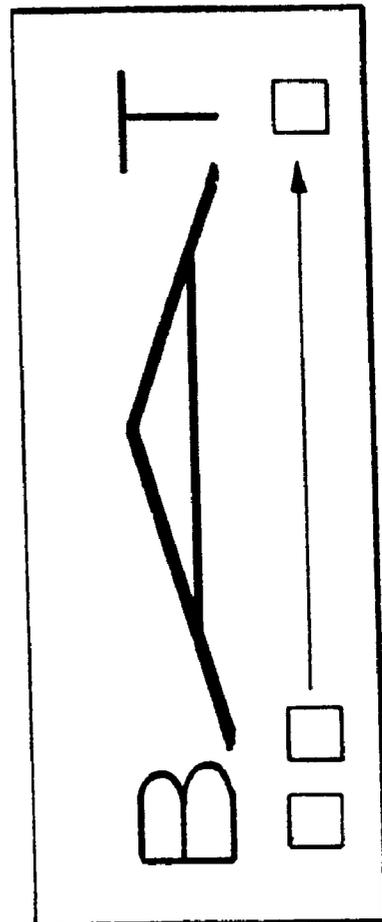
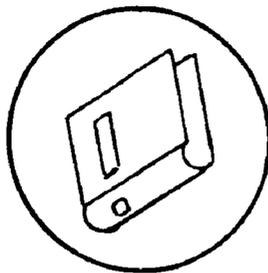
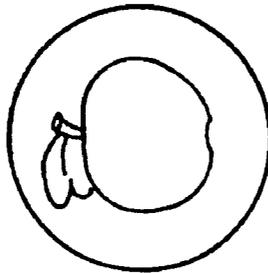


FIG. 14a

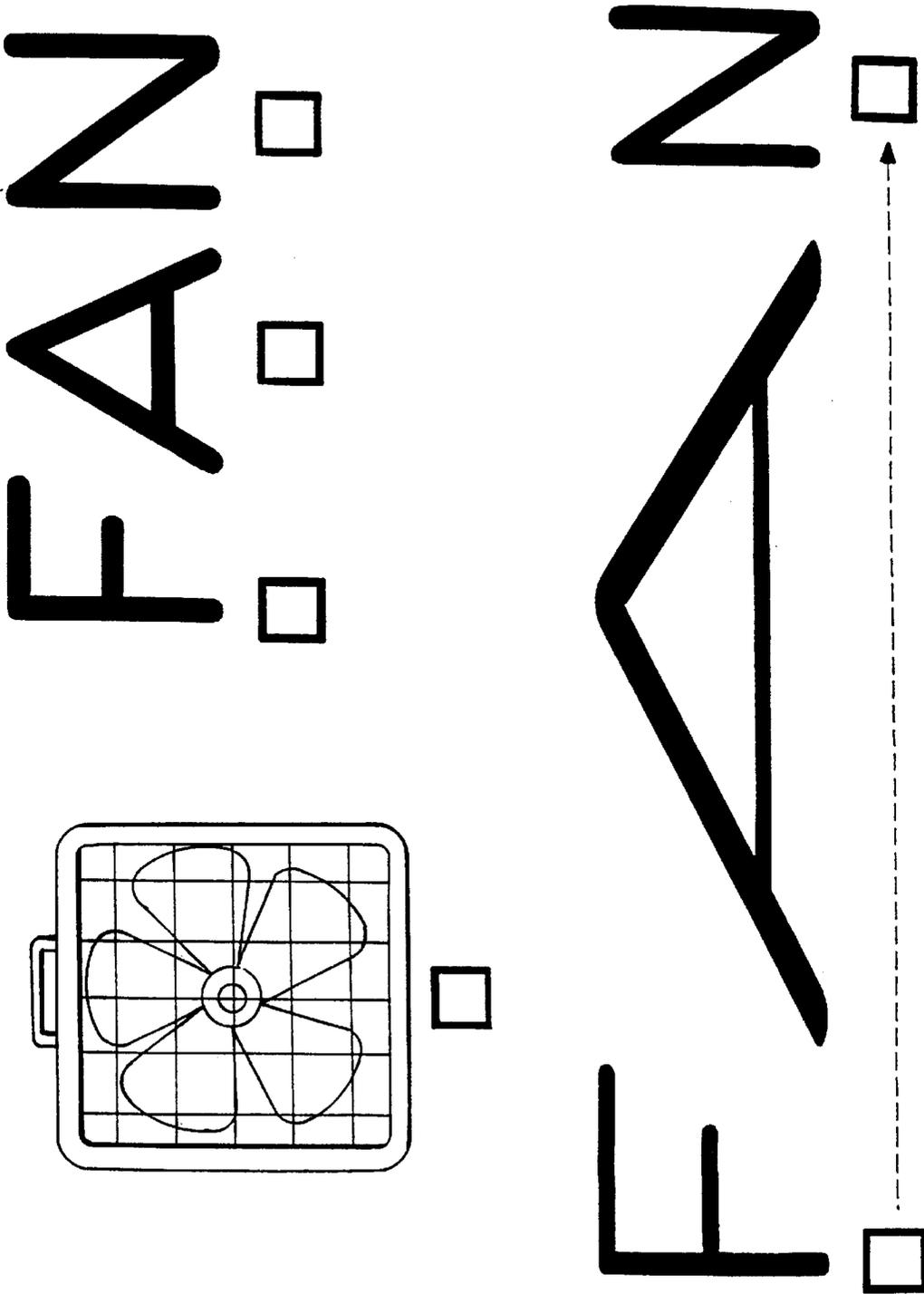


FIG. 14b

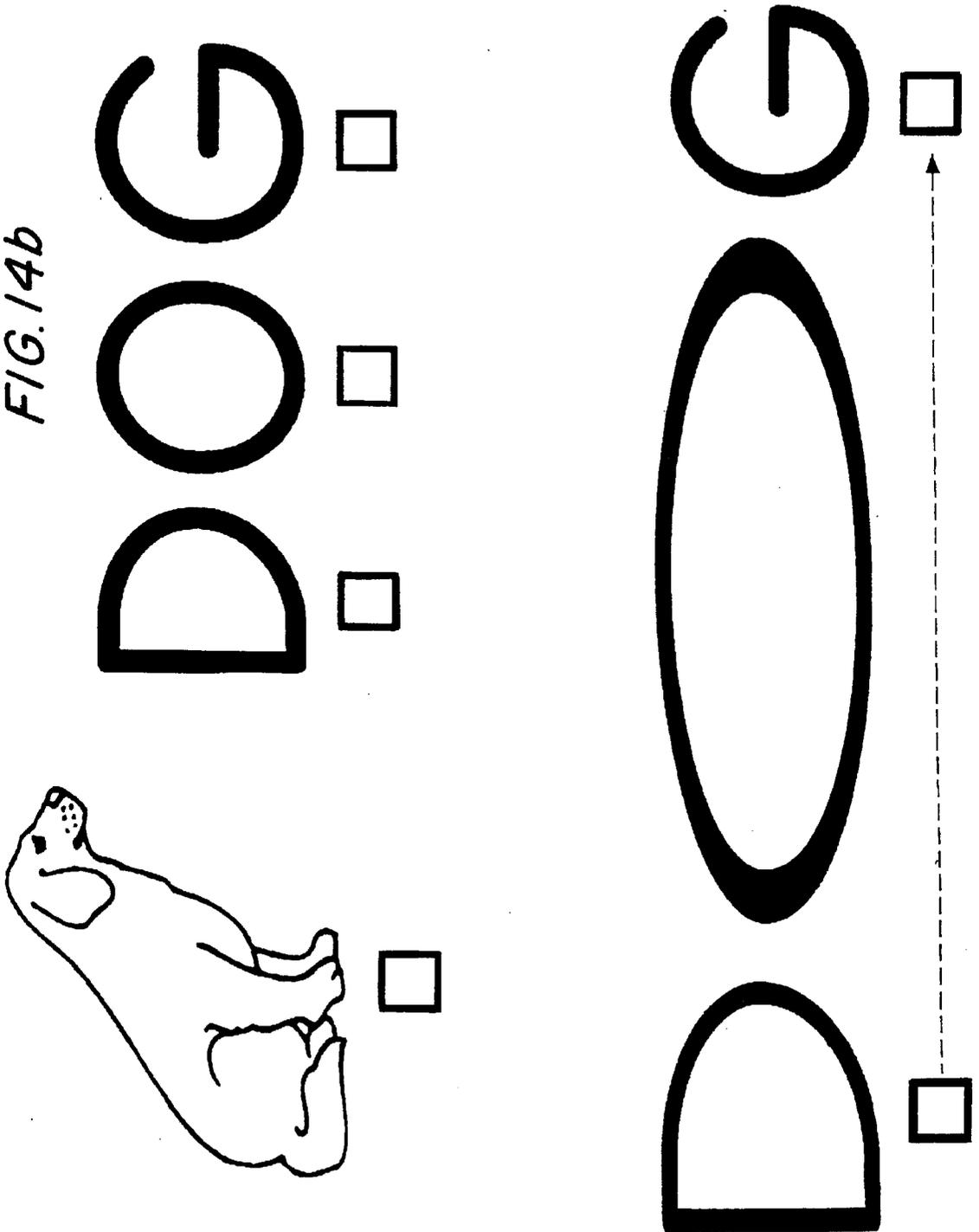
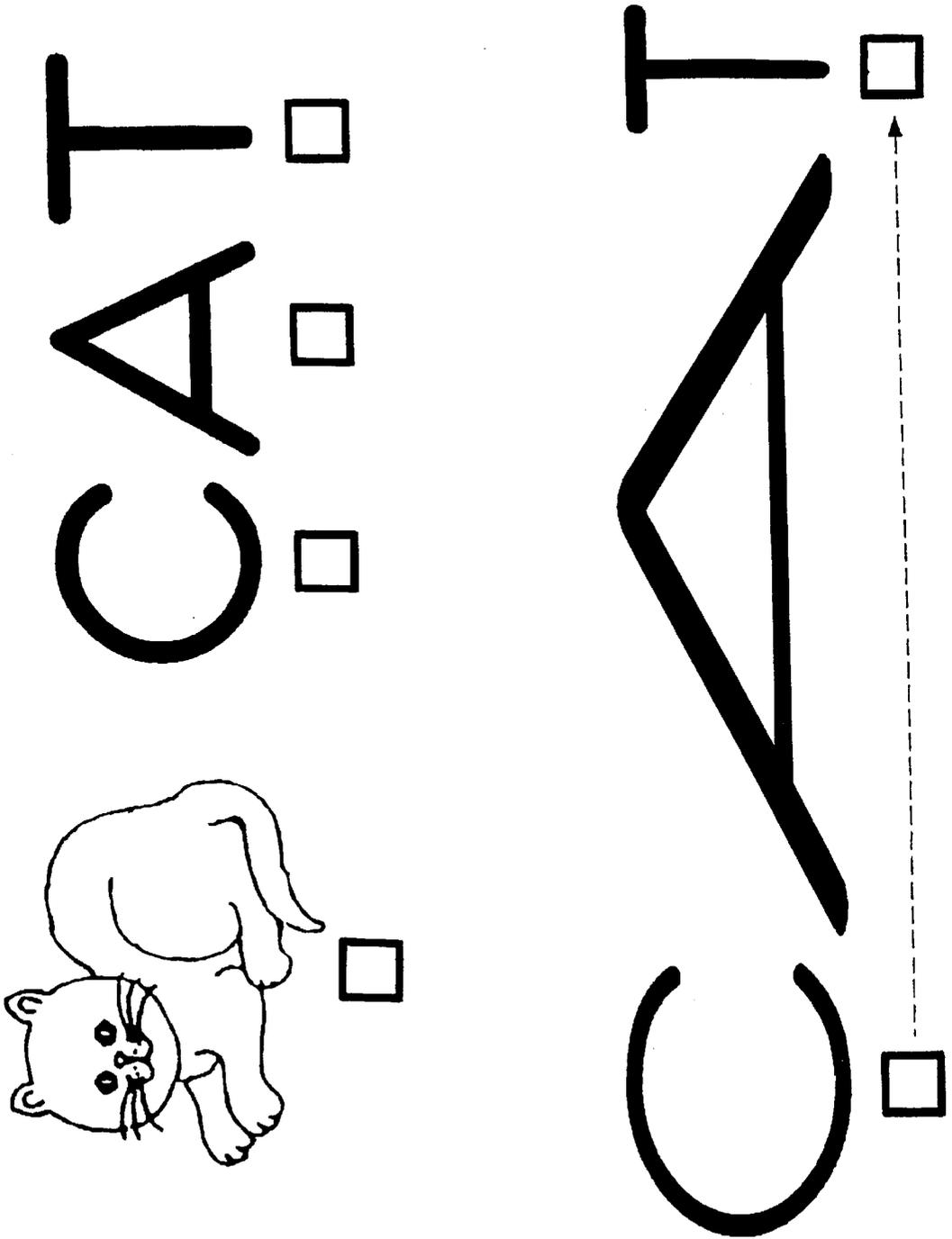


FIG. 14C



EDUCATIONAL AID AND METHOD FOR USING SAME

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a continuation-in-part of application Ser. No. 08/783,867, filed Jan. 16, 1997, which is a continuation of application Ser. No. 08/172,884, now U.S. Pat. No. 5,651,678 filed Dec. 23, 1993.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a system for teaching students to read. More particularly, the invention relates to an educational system for facilitating the rapid development of sight-word vocabularies, for facilitating the understanding of phonetic structure, and for developing correct pronunciation.

The first step in teaching a student to read is developing a foundation of fundamental words which the student can recognize on sight and then expanding this foundation over time. Educational tools in the form of books, flash cards, rebus symbols, orthography, and other devices have been employed in the past. These additional tools are generally integrated into a teaching plan which requires active involvement of an educator. Generally, the educator employs a rote memorization technique in which the educator articulates the word and the student repeats the word aloud while viewing and trying to remember the written representation of the word. In this manner, the student memorizes the visual sight of the word together with its enunciation.

However, some students, especially children, have short attention spans. It is difficult for them to pay attention for an extended period during a laborious process of teaching by a rote memorization technique. Even though prior educational tools employ a variety of different methods and devices to help reinforce the newly learned words in the mind of the student, learning by rote memorization is still difficult and the student can lose interest. Therefore, prior methods make it difficult for the new student to recognize fundamental words on sight.

Recognizing that typical education tools are tedious and unappealing, inventors developed different educational tools to increase the interest and attention span of students. One such educational tool is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 2,524,143, issued to W. D. Smith. The Smith patent discloses articulating words to a rhythmic or musical beat (e.g., a phonograph record) accompanied with corresponding text of these words. The text includes indicia marking each single syllable word or each syllable within a multiple syllable word. This indicia is used to indicate the natural rhythmic upbeats and downbeats to the words in common stories. However, the system is limited to use with rhythmic or musical beats which tends to focus the student's attention on the rhythmic beats through the story, not on the specific words in the story. Furthermore, the system requires a student to have rather sophisticated grasp of music prior to using the system. Therefore, the system would not be useful for instructing younger children.

Another variation on the rote memorization technique is taught in U.S. Pat. No. 4,437,837, issued to Schnettler et al. The Schnettler et al. patent teaches the use of rebus indicia with high frequency words (i.e. the, in, a, and) and also the use of word cards as reinforcement material for the memorization of these high frequency words. Schnettler et al.'s use of rebus indicia and word cards may assist in keeping a student's attention but still requires extensive employment

of rote memorization techniques wherein the educator articulates the words and the student repeats them in turn while viewing the visual representation of the word. The Schnettler et al. technique also has a fundamental limitation in its ability to expand as the student's vocabulary expands. Rebus indicia, such as cat, dog, wagon, house, etc., is only useful in teaching simple high frequency words. Thus, this system is only useful to lay the sight-word foundation for the first handful of words and loses its value when the student incorporates these simple nouns (dog, cat, etc.) into their sight-word vocabulary. Additionally, rebus indicia itself has a fundamental limitation in that, in general, it can only be used with monosyllabic words.

Other educational tools assist a more advanced reader. For example, the use of indicia for the syllabication of words is taught in U.S. Pat. No. 146,631, issued to C. Allen. The Allen patent teaches a method for designating and accentuating syllables with marks to facilitate instruction in reading. The Allen patent may be helpful in teaching pronunciation, enunciation and elocution. However, it does not lend itself to initial stages of learning to read by laying a foundation of fundamental words. The Allen patent also does not place the indicia on one syllable words to focus the student's attention on each individual word, nor does it teach a method for imprinting the words in the student's memory through the use of reinforcement material for the development of a sight-word vocabulary, as in the present invention.

The prior art suggests many ways to keep a student's attention while subjecting the reader to rote memorization techniques and many ways to assist the student's pronunciation of words. However, no system takes advantage of a student's, especially a child's, existing knowledge of certain simple texts, such as nursery rhymes, songs, poems, slogans or stories or that student's natural ability to rapidly learn and remember such a text without ever having learned to read that text. The natural ability to learn and to repeat this simple information can be utilized to build extensive sight-word vocabularies in a relatively short period of time.

Moreover, no current system uses a student's existing knowledge of certain simple texts and/or words in conjunction with visual aids in order to teach the student correct pronunciation and phonetic structure.

It would be highly desirable to have an educational aid and a technique to facilitate rapid development of sight-word vocabularies in a challenging and interesting manner using the student's natural ability to hear and remember simple information such as songs, poems, slogans, rhymes, or stories without forcing rote word memorization techniques on the student. In addition, it would be highly desirable to have such a technique incorporate a system for teaching a student correct pronunciation and phonetic structure.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is a principle object of the invention to provide an educational aid and a method for using it to facilitate rapid development of sight-word vocabularies in an interesting and challenging manner.

A further object is to provide such an aid and method which requires a minimum of instruction and supervision from an educator.

Another object of the invention is to provide such an aid and method which utilizes a student's natural ability to hear and learn songs, poems, slogans, rhymes, or stories which are easily remembered.

Still another object of the invention is to provide such an aid and method which incorporates a technique for teaching a student correct pronunciation and phonetic structure.

The above and further objects of the invention are realized by providing an educational aid which includes an ordered group of instructional steps designed to require a minimum of instruction and supervision from an educator.

The first step takes advantage of a student's, especially a child's, existing knowledge of or the student's natural ability to rapidly learn simple songs, and the like. The educator selects simple information which is already known verbatim by the student or can be learned easily by the student by hearing and repeating the information. For example, there are nursery rhymes which are known to children because they have heard and repeated them during their childhood. Once the student can recite the simple information verbatim, the student can learn how to read with little or no assistance of a teacher.

The second step involves presenting this simple information in a format which can be read, such as a printed text on paper or a computer disk or chip which can be displayed on a computer screen, and which contains notations to visually separate and focus a student's attention on each word or syllable. These notations can be represented in a visual teaching system as visual cues within text or in melody maps as graphic notations on analog maps, or in any other related manner.

A visual tracking system includes visual cues placed with the text of the readable information. Each cue notes each word or each syllable of each word. As the student mentally or orally, articulates each word or syllable of the text from verbatim memory, rather than by reading, the student follows along each syllable or word in the printed text and keeps his place by noting or touching each succeeding cue. As the student carries out the exercise and articulates each syllable or word of the text, he will become familiar with the sound of the word or syllable and visualize the appearance of each word or syllable. This exercise can be repeated until the student builds a sight-word vocabulary.

Melody maps include visual aids which contain graphical representations depicting analog melody patterns. The melody maps are useful when the material learned in the first step is a song, such as a familiar children's song. These melody patterns are mapped with the up and down movement of each phrase in the song melody. Each successive word or syllable is enclosed in a discrete note oval or similar notation to focus the student's attention on each word or syllable. As the student points at each note oval to keep his place while mentally or orally articulating the song from verbatim memory, rather than by reading, the student will begin to associate the sound of the word or syllable with its appearance in print. Thereby, the student begins to build a sight-word vocabulary.

The melody map is, in general, analogous to the note differentiation of a musical staff. Thus, the melody map serves as a rudimentary musical notation which helps the student keep his place by following the sound differentiation while mentally or orally singing the song. This same rudimentary musical notation can be used to teach a student to read standard musical notation.

It is, of course, understood that various notations can be used to visually separate and focus a student's attention on each word or syllable in the lyrics of songs, rhymes, poems, slogans or story text which has been learned. Other notations include color indicia, word size differentiation, and the like.

A third step involves the use of interesting and challenging reinforcement materials relating directly to the simple information which the student can recite verbatim and which was presented in a readable format. These reinforcement

materials are used by the student in conjunction with the readable format text containing the visual tracking system, the melody maps, or any other embodiment of the invention which focuses a student's attention on each word or syllable of the simple information. Each set of reinforcement materials may correspond to the key words of the specific song, rhyme, poem, slogan or story. The reinforcement materials are designed to allow the student to teach himself to read by building a sight-word vocabulary through his own efforts. The reinforcement materials can be supplied in a readable format like that of the text.

A word search exercise is one type of reinforcement technique to use together with the readable format text to build sight-word vocabularies. The word search exercise requires the student to step through the readable format text using the visual notations to find the word matching the word provided in the reinforcement material. By stepping through the readable format text to find the exercise word, the student articulates, mentally or orally, the song, rhyme, poem, slogan or story from memory, until he reaches the exercise word. At that point, he can correlate the sound of the word with the visual appearance of the word in both the readable format text and the reinforcement material.

Once the student gains some proficiency in correlating the sound of the word with its visual appearance, the student can use naming and writing exercises. The naming and writing exercise requires the student to recite the listed word and to write the letters of that word in the spaces provided further reinforcing the visual appearance of the word. If, while working through this exercise, the student does not recognize a word, he can use the readable format text to step through the corresponding text using the discrete note ovals or the visual cues to find the word in the story which matches the word in the reinforcement materials. This, in turn, requires the student to develop a strategy for remembering the appearance of that word, and leads to the rapid development of sight-word vocabularies. This exercise can be practiced by the student alone and without the intervention of an instructor.

In another reinforcement exercise, the student is supplied with a set of word cards or syllable cards to be used together with the readable format text, for example, to construct sentences and phrases or simply to enhance the student's reading ability of key words. Manipulation of the word cards and syllable cards motivates and reinforces learning. Again, if the student does not recognize a word or syllable, he can use, for example, the melody map, the visual tracking system, or similar notation system to step through the corresponding text using the discrete note ovals or the visual cues to find the word or syllable in the text which matches the word or syllable on the card.

This same exercise, as well as other described reinforcement exercises, can be used to identify and learn new words made up of a combination of syllables form words in the readable format text.

The reinforcement materials also include spelling exercises. The spelling exercises includes a set of cards containing letters form the alphabet and a representation of a portion of a word or a full word from the readable format text. The word portions can be represented on pre-printed pages or an educator can construct the word portion with the alphabet cards. The student selects the letter form the alphabet cards to complete the word. The full word can also be represented on preprinted pages or an educator can construct the full word with the alphabet cards. The student selects the letters from the alphabet cards to construct the word.

The reinforcement materials further include comprehension exercises. The comprehension exercises include sets of new sentences created from the key words which the student has now incorporated into his sight-word vocabulary. These new sentences promote the student's ability to read and use the newly learned key words in different sentence structures. Again, if the student does not recognize a word, he can refer to the readable format text to step through the corresponding text using the notations to find the word or syllable in the story which matches the corresponding word or syllable in the new sentences or to assist in comprehending the word meaning in the new sentence structure.

The reinforcement material format, used in conjunction with readable format text, requires the student to develop a strategy for remembering the appearance of each word. This, in turn, leads to the rapid development of sight-word vocabularies with minimal or no supervision from an educator.

The readable format text and the reinforcement exercises, if desired, can be specifically selected to accommodate a particular student. Text can be selected that is already known and of interest to the particular student. The readable format text and reinforcement materials can be selected to take into account the countless differences among students, such as differences in culture, language, age, reading proficiency, topic interest, degree of difficulty, etc.

The readable format text and corresponding reinforcement materials can be supplied together as a kit as hard copy in, for example, a book, newsletter or other printed medium or as part of a software package which, for example, can be displayed on a screen or printed by the student or educator.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other features of the invention will become apparent, and the invention itself will be best understood, by reference to the following descriptive embodiments of the invention taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

FIG. 1 represents an educational aid defined as a visual tracking system having a story text with indicia below the text.

FIG. 2 represents an educational aid defined as a melody map with discrete note ovals.

FIGS. 3a-3d represent the transition of the melody map shown in FIG. 2 to full musical notation.

FIG. 4 represents an educational reinforcement aid defined as a word search exercise.

FIG. 5 represents an educational reinforcement aid defined as a naming and writing exercise.

FIG. 6 represents an educational reinforcement aid defined as a word card exercise.

FIG. 7 represents an educational reinforcement aid defined as a syllable card exercise.

FIGS. 8a-d represent an educational reinforcement aid depicting the use of a set of alphabetic letter cards.

FIG. 9 represents an educational reinforcement aid defined as a comprehension exercise.

FIG. 10 represents an educational aid defined as a melody map with discrete note ovals using text from a children's song.

FIGS. 11a-d represent the transition of the melody map shown in FIG. 10 to full musical notation.

FIGS. 12a-j represent alternative word formats that may be used to generate the readable format text of the present invention.

FIG. 13 represents an additional alternative word format that may be used to generate the readable format text of the present invention.

FIGS. 14a-c represent examples of an alternative word format that is particularly useful in the reinforcement exercises of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The invention involves an educational aid for teaching students, particularly children (for example, 4-6 years old), to read. This educational aid utilizes a student's natural ability to recall information, such as simple songs, rhymes, and stories verbatim which can be easily memorized or which are already known by the student. The educational aid includes notations in readable format text to visually separate and focus a student's attention on each word or syllable in a readable format text, such as the lyrics of songs, rhymes, poems, slogans or story text. The readable format text can be provided in any suitable manner, such as print words on a card, paper or book or even as information on a computer chip or disk which then can be displayed in readable form on a screen in printed form. These notations can be represented as graphic notations on analog maps, visual cues within printed stories, and the like. The notated text is supplemented with reinforcement material, similar to word games. The educational aid which includes the notated readable format text and reinforcement material allows the student to learn fundamental words recognizable on sight leading to rapid development of reading skills. All of the learning material in the educational aid requires little or no educator supervision once the slogan, rhyme, poem, slogan or story etc. is taught to or known by the student.

Referring to FIG. 1, there is shown an educational aid referred to as a visual tracking system 10 for words and/or syllables. Visual cues 12 are placed within the readable format text 14 of a familiar lyric, rhyme, or story, etc. In this case, the text of FIG. 1 corresponds to the story of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears". These visual cues 12 can be any type of mark or color indicia in any size or shape which is above, below, around, or within the text to help focus the student's attention to each syllable or word. Each cue 12 denotes a syllable or word and helps the student keep his place by touching each succeeding cue 12 as he, mentally or orally, articulates the text 14 from verbatim memory rather than by reading. The visual cues 12 are preferably paced below the text 14 such that the student does not obscure the text 14 as he touches each succeeding cue 12 while articulating the text 14. It is also preferred that the visual cues 12 be less prominent than the text 14, such that the text 14 remains the focus of attention rather than the visual cue 12. FIG. 1 presents a gray-shaded, square visual cue 12 placed below the black printed text 14 at the beginning of each syllable or word. Thus, the student recites each word of the readable format text from memory while following along with each of these visual cues 12 thereby becoming familiar with both the sound and the visual appearance of the words and syllables. By repeating the exercise, the student will learn fundamental words which he can recognize on sight to develop his reading skills.

Shown in FIG. 2 is an educational aid defined as a melody map. The melody map 20 consists of a visual aid which contains graphical representations depicting analog melody patterns 22. The melody map 20 is generally used when the verbatim learned material is a song, such as a familiar children's song. The analog melody pattern of FIG. 2

corresponds to “The Alphabet Song”. The analog melody pattern **22** is mapped with the up and down movement of the song melody with each phrase. Each successive word or syllable **24** is preferably enclosed in a discrete note oval **26** to focus the student’s attention on each word or syllable **24**. These note ovals **26** can, of course, also be any type of mark or color indicia in any size or shape which is above, below, around, or within the text to help focus the student’s attention to each syllable or one syllable word and show the up and down movement of the song melody. As the student points at each note oval **26** while mentally or orally articulating the song from verbatim memory rather than reading, the student will associate the sound of the word or syllable **24** with its appearance in print. Thereby, the student begins to build a sight-word vocabulary.

The analog melody pattern of FIG. **10** depicts the same technique of FIG. **2**, but uses words and syllables **24** in the note ovals **26** corresponding to the children’s song “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”.

It is, of course, understood that a variety of rotation systems can be used to visually separate and focus a student’s attention on each word or syllable in the lyrics of songs, poems, rhymes, slogans or story text which has been learned. Other notation systems could include different colored letters, different word or syllable sizes, and the like.

The melody map **20** in FIG. **2** is, in general, analogous to the note differentiation of a musical staff. Thus, the melody map **20** serves also as a rudimentary musical notation which helps the student keep his place by following the sound differentiation while mentally or orally articulating the song. With further instruction, this same rudimentary musical notation can be used as a first step to teach a student to read standard musical notation.

FIGS. **3a–3c** represent the sequential steps of teaching a student to read standard musical notation. FIG. **3a** corresponds to the melody map **20** of FIG. **2**. The student is taught the song with the rudimentary musical notations of each successive word or syllable **24** enclosed in a discrete note oval **26** or equivalent notation to focus the student’s attention on note differentiation of each word or syllable **24**.

Referring to FIG. **3b**, once the song is learned with the rudimentary melody map **20** of FIG. **3a**, the student will shift to a scaled melody map **30**, shown in FIG. **3b**. The scaled melody map **30** overlays the rudimentary melody map **20** of FIG. **3a** onto a musical staff **32**. The scaled melody map **30** also includes each successive word or syllable **24** enclosed in a discrete note oval **26** to focus the student’s attention on note differentiation of each word or syllable **24**. However, now the student using the sound of each word or syllable **24** is also taught the relative position of the note for that sound on the standard musical staff **32**.

Referring to FIG. **3c**, once the student is familiar with the relative position of the note corresponding to each word or syllable **24** on the standard musical staff **32**, the music symbols **42** for note durations are added to the scaled melody map **30** of FIG. **3b**, such as the duration symbols for whole, half, quarter, eighths sixteenth, thirty-second, or sixty-fourth notes, to form a duration scaled melody map **40**. In this fashion, a student is taught both the concept of duration of notes and the symbols for the length of those durations.

Referring to FIG. **3d**, the final stage of teaching a student to read standard musical notation **50** is to eliminate the word or syllable **24** enclosed in the discrete note ovals **26** and replace them with standard musical notes **52**. At this point, the student will have acquired the ability to recognize and read standard musical notation **50**.

FIGS. **11a–d** show the same sequential steps of teaching a student to read standard musical notation as shown in FIGS. **3a–d**, but uses words and syllables **24** in the note ovals **26** corresponding to the children’s song “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”.

FIGS. **4–9** illustrate reinforcement materials which relate directly to the text which has been learned. These reinforcement materials can be used in conjunction with the visual tracking system (shown in FIG. **1**), the melody maps (shown in FIG. **2**), or any other embodiment of the instant invention which focuses a student’s attention on each word or syllable of a readable format text such as learned song, poem, rhyme, slogan or story. Each set of reinforcement materials relates to the key words of each specific song, etc. The following examples of reinforcement materials, shown in FIGS. **4–9**, are designed to allow the student to learn to read by building a sight-word vocabulary through his own efforts. The reinforcement materials shown in FIGS. **4–9** use as an example the key words of the story “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” referred to in FIG. **1**.

In FIG. **4**, there is shown a word search exercise **60** which is a technique to be used with the visual tracking system (shown in FIG. **1**), the melody maps (shown in FIG. **2**), or similar notation systems in building of sight-word vocabularies. The word search exercises **60** require the student to move through the text **14** of FIG. **1** guided by the visual cues **12**, the discrete ovals **26** of FIG. **2**, or similar notation system as he recites the text **14** from memory to find the word in the text matching the word in the exercise, thereby teaching himself to correlate the sound and the visual appearance of the word.

Shown in FIG. **5** is a naming and writing exercise. The naming and writing exercise **70** teaches the student to correlate the sound of the key words and their visual appearance. The naming and writing exercise **70** requires the student to recite the listed words **72** and to write the letters of the word in the spaces **74** provided. If, while working through this exercise **70**, the student does not recognize a word, he can use the corresponding visual tracking system, melody map, or similar notation system to step through the story using the visual cues **12** of FIG. **1**, the discrete note ovals **26** of FIG. **2**, or similar notation system to find the word in the story which matches the word in the naming and writing type exercise **70**. This, in turn, requires the student to develop a strategy for remembering the appearance of that word, and leads to the rapid development of sight-word vocabularies.

FIG. **6** depicts a set of word cards. The student can use a set of word cards **80** in conjunction with the readable format text to construct sentences and phrases **82** once he is proficient in recognizing some words on sight. The hands-on manipulation of the word cards **80** motivates and reinforces learning. Again, if the student does not recognize a word displayed on the word card, he can step through the corresponding readable format text using the visual cues **12** of FIG. **1**, the discrete notes ovals **26** of FIG. **2** or similar notation system to find the word in the text which matches the word on the word card.

FIG. **7** depicts a set of syllable cards. The student can use the set of syllable cards **90** in conjunction with the readable format text to construct polysyllable words **92** once he is proficient in recognizing some words on sight. The hands-on manipulation of the syllable cards **90** motivates and reinforces learning of polysyllable words. Again, if the student does not recognize a syllable displayed on the syllable card, he can step through the corresponding readable format text

using the visual cues **12** of FIG. 1, the discrete notes ovals **26** of FIG. 2, or similar notation system to find the syllable in the text which matches the syllable on the syllable cards.

FIGS. 8a–d depict the use of a set of alphabetic letter cards. The student can use the set of letter cards **100** in conjunction with the readable format text to construct words or complete word portions. The letter cards **100** preferably have the capital letter printed on one side **102** and the corresponding small case letter on the reverse side **104**, as shown in FIG. 8a. These letter cards **100** can be used to complete word portions **106** by placing an appropriate letter card **100** in a designated position **108**, as shown in FIG. 8b. Additionally, these letter cards **100** can be used to construct entire words by matching the letter cards **100** to each letter in a word representation **110** and placing the letter cards **100** in their appropriate place at the designated positions **108**, as shown in FIG. 8c. Moreover, the word representation can be represented with syllable indication **112** with the designated positions **108** also positioned with syllable indication, as shown in FIG. 8d. Again, the student places the letter cards **100** in their appropriate place at the designated positions **108**. However, the representation of the words with syllable indication **112** and the designated positions **108** with syllable indication help the student to learn the concept of word syllables and to build polysyllable word vocabulary. This hands-on manipulation of the letter cards **100** motivates and reinforces learning, and lays the foundation for recognizing the spelling of words. Again, if the student does not recognize a word displayed on the word card, he can step through the corresponding readable format text using the visual cues **12** of FIG. 1, the discrete notes ovals **26** of FIG. 2, or similar notation system to find the word or syllable in the text which matches the word or syllable on the reinforcement materials.

FIG. 9 depicts comprehension exercises **120**. The comprehension exercises **120** utilize a set of new sentences **122** created from the key words which the study has now incorporated into his sight-word vocabulary. These new sentences are used to enhance the student's ability to comprehend and use the newly learned key words in different sentence structures. Again, if the student does not recognize a word, he can step through the corresponding readable format text, to find the word in the text which matches the unrecognized word in the new sentences. The readable format text can also be used to assist in comprehending the word meaning in the new sentence structure.

After the student is taught how to use the reinforcement materials, the use of the reinforcement materials in conjunction with the readable format text permits the student to develop a strategy for remembering the appearance of each word which leads to the rapid development of sight-word vocabularies with minimal or no supervision from an educator.

FIGS. 12a–j illustrate alternative word formats that may be used to generate the readable format text. As can be seen from the figures, the alternative formats incorporate one or more of the previously described visual cues, and/or one or more modified forms of the previously described visual cues. As can be further seen from the figures, in each of the alternative formats letters or phonemes that require extended pronunciation are visually extended. In this manner, the alternative formats visually depict the pronunciation of words, thereby providing a visual tool for teaching a student correct pronunciation and phonetic understanding.

FIG. 12a shows the word "NOW" presented in an alternative format. The upper portion of the figure shows the word "NOW" with a notation placed under each letter, the

notations in this case being the gray-shaded squares first described in relation to FIG. 1. The lower portion of the figure depicts the word "NOW" with the "OW" portion appearing horizontally stretched. The lower portion also includes gray-shaded squares, one under the "N" and one under the "OW", and further includes an arrow under the "OW" portion.

The purpose of the upper portion presentation in FIG. 12a is to depict the word "NOW" as it normally appears (unextended) and to highlight the fact that the word has three letters (one square for each letter). The purpose of the bottom portion is to highlight the phonetic structure of the word "NOW". In the bottom portion, since the "OW" is effectively pronounced as one sound, only one square is provided for the two letters. Furthermore, since the "OW" has an extended pronunciation, an arrow is placed next to the square associated with the "OW".

FIG. 12b shows the word "AND" presented in an alternative format. The presentation is similar to that of FIG. 12a, except that in the lower portion of FIG. 12b each letter has a grey square associated with it. Thus, for example, the distinction between the "A" and "N" sounds is emphasized relative to the case in which only a single grey square is provided for the "A" and "N".

FIGS. 12c–12j show various words presented in alternative formats similar to the formats described in connection with FIGS. 12a and 12b. Of special note are FIGS. 12f, 12g and 12j.

In the lower portion of FIG. 12f, only one grey square is provided for the letters "ME" of the word "TIME". There is no grey square under the "E" because it is not pronounced, i.e. the "E" is "silent".

In the lower portion of FIG. 12g, an "extended" grey square appears below the "NG" part of the word "SING". The extended square visually cues the student that the letters "N" and "G" are united in their pronunciation. In this particular case, the extended square does not indicate that the "NG" requires an extended pronunciation—although it should be noted that possible alternative embodiments include an embodiment in which extended squares are used to indicate extended pronunciation. The format of FIG. 12g is particularly useful as a substitute for the format described in relation to FIG. 12f.

FIG. 12j shows how the format of FIG. 12g is applied to the word "WITH".

FIG. 13 shows an alternative format in which each sound of a word, in this case the word "BAT", is associated with a picture of an item (e.g., a person, place or thing). For a particular letter of the word "BAT", the pronunciation of the word describing the picture associated with that letter begins with the same sound required for pronunciation of that letter. For instance, the "B" in "BAT" is associated with a picture of a book, and by initiating enunciation of the word "book" one enunciates the same sound associated with the letter "B" in "BAT". Similarly, the letter "A" in "BAT" is associated with a picture of an apple, and the letter "T" in "BAT" is associated with a picture of a turtle.

FIGS. 14a–c illustrate an alternative word format that may be used in a reinforcement exercise according to the invention. As can be seen from the figures, each word is depicted in a three part presentation: the word as it normally appears with the addition of visual cues under each letter, the word in a pronunciation highlighted form, and a picture of an item which the word represents. Thus, FIG. 14a includes the word "FAN" as it normally appears with the addition of visual cues under each letter; the word "FAN" with an

extended "A" and an arrow underneath the extended "A"; and a picture of a fan. FIGS. 14b and 14c illustrate similar presentations for the words "DOG" and "CAT", respectively.

The format depicted in FIGS. 14a–c may be used to build a student's vocabulary and pronunciation. For instance, FIG. 14a may be displayed on a touch sensitive computer screen, whereupon the student is required to touch each grey square as they articulate the word "FAN". The displayed presentation combined with the touching reinforces the student's spelling and pronunciation of the displayed word. Moreover, the same pictures that are used in the format of FIGS. 14a–c may be used to denote sounds in the FIG. 13 format, thereby integrating the two formats into a single reinforcement exercise.

By using any one or more of the formats depicted in FIGS. 12a–14c in conjunction with the educational system described in relation to FIGS. 1–11 an educational system having a phonetic teaching aspect is realized.

It is understood that the invention is not restricted to the detailed description of the invention, which may be modified without departure from the accompanying claims.

What is claimed is:

1. An educational aid for developing sight-word vocabulary in a student, comprising:

a non-syllabified readable format text which is adapted to be or is already memorized verbatim by the student, said text having one or more words and each word having at least one syllable, and said text including a series of notations, each notation denoting at least one letter of said text, wherein portions of said words that require extended pronunciation are presented in a visually extended format so as to emphasize phonetic structure; and

reinforcement means, separate from said text but adapted to be used together with said text, for reinforcing the student's sight recognition of words and syllables from said text;

wherein said reinforcement means is operable to allow the student to note each successive notation in said text as the student recites said text from memory, and is further operable to allow the student to match specified words and syllables to corresponding words and syllables in said text by using sight recognition.

2. The educational aid of claim 1, wherein each successive notation is a visual cue in said readable format text.

3. The educational aid of claim 1, wherein said visual cues are placed below each syllable of said readable format text.

4. The educational aid of claim 1, wherein said visual cues are placed below each word of said readable format text.

5. The educational aid of claim 1, wherein said visual cues are colored to be less prominent than the print of said readable format text.

6. The educational aid of claim 1, wherein said visual cues are gray-shaded squares placed below each syllable and said syllables are printed in a darker shade than that of said squares.

7. The educational aid of claim 1, wherein said visual cues are gray-shaded squares placed below each word and said words are printed in a darker shade than that of said squares.

8. The educational aid of claim 1, wherein said text includes arrows to stress said visually extended portions.

9. The educational aid of claim 1, wherein said notations denote single letters of said words.

10. The educational aid of claim 1, wherein a single extended notation is used to denote a combination of two or

more letters that form a single sound when the word containing said letters is enunciated, the extent of said extended notation being proportional to the number of letters which the extended notation denotes.

11. The educational aid of claim 1, wherein each said word of said readable format text is associated with one or more pictures depicting an item, the enunciation of the word representing said item beginning with a sound that is present in the enunciation of said word from said readable format text.

12. The educational aid of claim 1, wherein each said word is associated with a picture of an item represented by said word.

13. The educational aid of claim 1, wherein each word or syllable of said readable format text is displayed in a graphical representation depicting an analog melody pattern.

14. An educational method for developing sight-word vocabulary in a student, comprising the steps of:

providing a non-syllabified readable format text which is adapted to be or is already memorized verbatim by the student, said text having one or more words and each word having at least one syllable, and said text including a series of notations, each notation denoting at least one letter of said text, wherein portions of said words that require extended pronunciation are presented in a visually extended format so as to emphasize phonetic structure;

providing a reinforcement means, separate from said text but adapted to be used together with said text, for reinforcing the student's sight recognition of words and syllables from said text; and

having the student recite each word or syllable of the readable format text which the student can recite from memory while visually following along each successive notation corresponding to that word in the readable format text.

15. The educational method of claim 14, wherein each successive notation is a visual cue in said readable format text.

16. The educational method of claim 14, wherein said visual cues are placed below each syllable of said readable format text.

17. The educational method of claim 14, wherein said visual cues are placed below each word of said readable format text.

18. The educational method of claim 14, wherein said visual cues are colored to be less prominent than the print of said readable format text.

19. The educational method of claim 14, wherein said visual cues are gray-shaded squares placed below each syllable and said syllables are printed in a darker shade than that of said squares.

20. The educational method of claim 14, wherein said visual cues are gray-shaded squares placed below each word and said words are printed in a darker shade than that of said squares.

21. The educational method of claim 14, wherein said text includes arrows to stress said visually extended portions.

22. The educational method of claim 14, wherein said notations denote single letters of said words.

23. The educational method of claim 14, wherein a single extended notation is used to denote a combination of two or more letters that form a single sound when the word containing said letters is enunciated, the extent of said extended notation being proportional to the number of letters which the extended notation denotes.

24. The educational method of claim 14, wherein each said word of said readable format text is associated with one

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or more pictures depicting an item, the enunciation of the word representing said item beginning with a sound that is present in the enunciation of said word from said readable format text.

25. The educational method of claim 14, wherein each said word is associated with a picture of an item represented by said word.

26. The educational aid of claim 14, wherein each word or syllable of said readable format text is displayed in a graphical representation depicting an analog melody pattern.

27. An educational aid for developing sight-word vocabulary in a student, comprising:

a readable format text which is adapted to be or is already memorized verbatim by the student, said text having words, each word having at least one syllable, and each word being printed without demarcating spaces between said syllables of said word, and said text including a series of notations, each notation respectively denoting and connecting each syllable of said text; and

reinforcement means, separate from said text but adapted to be used together with said text, for reinforcing the student's sight recognition of words and syllables from said text;

wherein said reinforcement means is operable to allow the student to note each successive notation in said text as

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the student recites said text from memory, and is further operable to allow the student to match specified words and syllables to corresponding words and syllables in said text by using sight recognition.

28. The educational aid of claim 27, wherein each successive notation is a visual cue in said readable format text.

29. The educational aid of claim 28, wherein said visual cues are placed below each syllable of said readable format text.

30. The educational aid of claim 28, wherein said visual cues are placed below each word of said readable format text.

31. The educational aid of claim 28, wherein said visual cues are colored to be less prominent than the print of said readable format text.

32. The educational aid of claim 28, wherein said visual cues are gray-shaded squares placed below each syllable and said syllables are printed in a darker shade than that of said squares.

33. The educational aid of claim 28, wherein said visual cues are gray-shaded squares placed below each word and said words are printed in a darker shade than that of said squares.

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